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Arkansas Agriculture Department & Farm Credit Announce Arkansas Grown School Gardens of the Year

Little Rock, Ark. – Among 28 school garden contestants from across Arkansas, four have been chosen as Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year contest winners. School garden criteria included any Arkansas school, grades pre-K-12, with a working school garden during the 2014-2015 school year with photo or video documentation of garden activities. Winning schools from Marion, Madison, Pulaski, and Hot Spring Counties are as follows:

- Overall School Garden Winner: **Yellville-Summit Schools, Yellville**
- Best Nutrition Education Based School Garden: **Kingston School, Kingston (near Jasper)**
- Best Environmental Based Education School Garden: **Forest Park Elementary School, Little Rock**
- Best Community Collaboration School Garden: **Magnet Cove High School, Malvern**

“We congratulate these schools for their commitment to hands-on education initiatives in outdoor learning environments that promote lifelong healthy habits for families and communities. A healthier future for Arkansas begins with healthy habits from our students,” said Governor Asa Hutchinson.

Through funds provided by Farm Credit, a \$1,500 donation is presented to Overall Winner Yellville-Summit, and \$500 is awarded to all other winning school gardens, during special presentations by Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward and Farm Credit at each respective school. The Arkansas Agriculture Department and Farm Credit began the Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year contest to raise awareness about the importance of involving young people in the process of fresh food cultivation and production.

“We believe, as a farmer-owned cooperative, it is important to support local food system initiatives such as the Arkansas Grown School Garden Program,” said Farm Credit Midsouth President & CEO, James McJunkins, on behalf of the Farm Credit cooperatives of Arkansas. “Local food projects like this are a great way to educate the next generation and the public about food production and agriculture,” he said.

Winning schools in Yellville-Summitt, Kingston, Forrest Park, and Magnet Cove grow a variety of produce including all varieties of fruits and vegetables, as well as herbs and flowers. In most cases, gardens are supported by community donations, grant funding, or student fundraising efforts. Raised and in-ground garden bed structures, greenhouses and/or hoop houses, as well as containers were used by schools to grow produce.

“The interest in local foods continues to expand. It is exciting to support partners in the education system that are increasing knowledge of food production. Together, we will create opportunities that build upon and strengthen agriculture and the important role it plays in Arkansas,” said McJunkins.

The Arkansas Grown program promotes food and products grown in Arkansas by Arkansas producers, and helps make the connection between growers and buyers. Arkansas Grown is a program of the Arkansas Agriculture Department. Find producers, farmer’s markets, and other local fresh food resources at www.arkansasgrown.org.

With approximately \$3 billion in assets, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services, Delta Agricultural Credit Association, Farm Credit Midsouth, and Farm Credit of Western Arkansas support rural communities and agriculture across Arkansas with reliable, consistent credit and financial services today and tomorrow. The Farm Credit cooperatives of Arkansas are owned by the more than 10,000 customers. Through the cooperative structure, customer-owners have a voice and vote in the associations’ governance and share in the their cooperative’s financial success through cooperative returns, which total more than \$152 million since 1997.

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